

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LUANDA 0755

E.O. 11652: GDS

TWGS: PINT PFOR MILI AO PO

SUBJECT: AN EARLY PORTUGUESE PULLOUT?

1. ACCORDING TO A SENIOR MEMBER OF THE ARMED FORCES COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR ANGOLA, CMDTE. MARTINS E SILVA, THE AFM IS AT LEAST CONSIDERING SPEEDING UP THE WITHDRAWAL RATE OF THE PORTUGUESE MILITARY FORCES FROM ANGOLA WHILE AT THE SAME TIME STAYING WITHIN THE LETTER OF THE ALVOR AGREEMENT. MARTINS SAID THAT THE AFM IS FED UP WITH THE INABILITY OF MPLA AND FNLA TO ADHERE TO THE ACCORD AND POINTED OUT THAT THE ACCORD STATES ONLY THAT THE PORTUGUESE WITHDRAWAL MUST BEGIN ON OCT 1 AND BE COMPLETED BY FEB 29, 1976. HE SAID "WE COULD ALL BE OUT OF HERE BY NOV 12." WHEN ASKED WHAT THIS WOULD MEAN FOR ANGOLA, HE SHRUGGED AND SAID THAT AFTER NOV 11 "ITS THEIR PROBLEM, NOT OURS."

2. BY CONTRAST, A FEW MONTHS AGO MARTINS TOLD US THE WITHDRAWAL OF THEIR 24,000 TROOPS WOULD NOT BEGIN UNTIL NOV 1 AND WOULD PROCEED AT AN ORDERLY RATE OF 6,000 MEN PER MONTH WITH THE POSSIBILITY OF LEAVING SOME ADVISORS AND TECHNICIANS BEHIND. HIS PRESENT STATEMENT IS SYMPTOMATIC OF THE DISCOURAGED OUTLOOK INFECTING THE AFM HERE BUT DOES NOT YET REPRESENT POLICY. IF MATTERS CONTINUE TO DETERIORATE, HOWEVER, IT IS
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POSSIBLE THE PORTUGUESE MILITARY WILL TAKE THE QUICKEST ROUTE

OPEN TO THEM AND EFFECTIVELY ABDICATE THE REMNANTS OF THEIR PEACE-KEEPING ROLE AS EARLY AS THEY CAN. IF THEY DO SO, ONLY SOME FORM OF UNILATERAL OR INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION WILL PREVENT ANGOLA'S PRESENT LIMITED CIVIL WAR FROM BECOMING AN ALL OUT AND BLOODY CONFLICT.

3. HOWEVER, ALL THREE LIBERATION GROUPS ARE RABIDLY OPPOSED - BOTH PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY - TO OUTSIDE INTERVENTION OF ANY TYPE. (THIS IS THE ONLY VISIBLE POINT OF COMPLETE INTER-GROUP AGREEMENT SAVE THAT ON ANGOLA'S CLAIM TO CABINDA.) THE AVERSION TO POSSIBLE INTERVENTION, ALTHOUGH PRESENTED AS A MATTER OF PRINCIPLE, IS REALLY MORE EACH GROUP'S FEELINGS THAT ANY FORM OF INTERVENTION WOULD IN EFFECT FAVOR ONE GROUP AND EACH GROUP'S FEAR THAT IT MIGHT NOT BE THEM. NATURALLY ENOUGH THE GROUP OR GROUPS STANDING TO LOSE BY INTERVENTION WILL OPPOSE IT. FURTHER, SINCE NONE OF THE THREE GROUPS IS IN ANY PRESENT DANGER OF BEING MILITARILY WIPED OUT, OPPOSITION TO A "PEACE-KEEPING" OPERATION-FROM WHICHEVER GROUP - IS BOUND TO BE VIOLENT AND PROBABLY EFFECTIVELY SO. THIS IS A "CATCH 22" PROBLEM, IF INTERVENTION IS NECESSARY IT WILL BE BECAUSE TWO OR MORE GROUPS ARE SLUGGING IT OUT WITH NO END IN SIGHT. BUT IF THEY ARE DOING THAT, INTERVENTION WILL BE MET BY FORCE FROM ONE, TWO OR CONCEIVABLY ALL THREE. IF INTERVENTION CAN BE ACHIEVED WITHOUT SERIOUS FIGHTING IT WILL MEAN THAT IT REALLY WASN'T NECESSARY, SINCE ONE OR TWO OF THE THREE GROUPS ALREADY WILL BE ON THE ROPES.
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